

Hon. Aimee K. Jorjani  
Chairman

Rick Gonzalez, AIA  
Vice Chairman

John M. Fowler  
Executive Director



August 28, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with you recently at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. I wanted to take this opportunity to follow up on our conversation of how digitization of cultural resources data can improve project delivery and speed environmental review. There is a timely opportunity for Interior to invest in such digitization by States and Indian tribes – by including funding for that purpose in the FY 2022 funding request for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF).

The ACHP Digital Information Task Force has been meeting since 2018 to explore how improving access to digital data on cultural resources can improve federal project planning. Your representative on the ACHP, Ryan Hambleton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, serves on the Task Force, and the National Park Service has been directly engaged. The Task Force has found that when federal agencies, applicants, and consultants have ready access to accurate, current data about the location and nature of historic properties, they can make project siting and design decisions that take historic properties into account earlier and more effectively. Better access to reliable historic property information also can make a significant contribution to improving the efficiency of environmental reviews, including reviews carried out under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. While much work has been done by federal agencies, states, and Indian tribes to develop successful and accessible data management tools regarding cultural resources, implementation has been varied and much work remains to be done.

Providing dedicated FY 2022 HPF funding to State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to use toward addressing their unique digitization needs would leverage their cultural resources data as a strategic asset by improving its availability. This would speed delivery of important federal and federally assisted projects, not only for Interior agencies, but for all federal agencies.

I hope that you will consider this recommendation regarding HPF funding for FY 2022. I would be happy to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,

Aimee K. Jorjani  
Chairman

cc: Robert Wallace, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks  
Scott Cameron, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget